



(U//FOUO) SID Around the World: The Rheinland

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(S//SI) Having served on one field tour at NCEUR, Stuttgart, Germany, in the mid-1990s, I was once again fortunate to get an offer for another field assignment in Germany just two years later, at NSA's European Technical Center (ETC) in Wiesbaden. The position at ETC was as a Foreign Relations Staff Officer, responsible for coordinating technical support to NSA's Third Party partners in Europe and the Middle East. My wife served as NSA's liaison to the Army's 66th Military Intelligence Group in Darmstadt. We lived between Wiesbaden and Darmstadt, due south of Frankfurt, and our school-age children went to the DoDDs school in Darmstadt.

(S//SI) For a career Intelligence and Language Analyst, the most interesting and rewarding aspects of working at ETC were exposure to the engineering work that NSA does and to the superb group of people who carry it out. It was a pleasure, indeed, even an inspiration, to deal with the technical personnel who put SIGINT and related systems in place, to witness their expertise, and to gain greater awareness of technical support, maintenance, and logistics problems. The engineering and logistics friends I made in Wiesbaden are ones I would likely not have met in my regular career field back home, and I learned a lot from them. Supporting NSA's foreign partnerships and sometimes dealing directly with foreign partners was a particularly interesting experience as well.

(U) Outside of work, the most rewarding aspect of living in the Rheinland area of Germany is the opportunity to travel across Germany and much of Europe. France, the Benelux countries, and Switzerland are all within a few hours' drive, for a weekend or, for border destinations such as Strasbourg, even a day trip. For longer drives, Paris and Berlin are within six hours drive, the Alps are 3-7 hours away, depending on which mountain is being sought, and other destinations - in southern France, the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, and Italy - are within reasonable long-distance reach for an extended vacation. Living near Frankfurt also puts one very close to rail and air connections to anywhere in Europe, including low-cost air travel to many European destinations. It was a thrill to be able to visit sites of historical and cultural significance during our tour, and living in Germany has marked our children with a considerable appreciation for European history and culture.

(U) The middle Rhein area between Mainz/Wiesbaden and Koblenz is quite scenic and offers many opportunities to sample aspects of German life, especially gastronomic pleasures, closer to home. You don't have to go far to find a really good white wine, for some very good Rieslings may well be just down the street. Wiesbaden is located within the Rheingau wine area; the Rheinhessen is just across the Rhein, and the Rheinpfalz (Rheinland Palatinate) and Mosel-Saar-Ruwer regions, as well as the French province of Alsace, are close by. Even lesser-known wine regions, like Franconia, are within reach.



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(U) As for cuisine, eating in Germany can be a real pleasure for all but the most conservative tastes. I have not had a bad German meal yet. Local specialties abound; in the Rhein/Main plain closer to Darmstadt, the Germans grow the sweet, white asparagus ("Spargel") that is harvested in May and enjoyed throughout Germany. The strawberry season follows immediately thereafter.

(U//FOUO) It might belabor the obvious that I enjoyed living in Germany to no end. Working and living in the field is a great experience, and working at ETC and living in Germany was no exception. I'd do it again.

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